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DREAM CANYON

By Robert J. Smithdas

[EDITOR'S NOTE: *Robert J. Smithdas is totally blind, totally deaf. He is also gifted. Now twenty-one, he will enter St. John's University next fall, will be the second deaf-blind person ever to attend college. (Helen Keller was the first.) His quick, deep intelligence was discovered last year by tests at The Industrial Home for the Blind in Brooklyn, New York. Sent there to learn a handicraft, he had promptly learned all the Home taught. Recently he completed a volume of poems, which —like this article—prove his perception through the senses of touch and smell.*]

LAST summer two friends and I spent a blissful vacation high in the mountains of western Colorado. We camped at Dream Canyon, a beautiful rocky glen filled with pine and aspen, and watered by the rushing torrent of Boulder Creek.

The camp is owned by Henry Lawrence, a true old-timer of the Old West. Years ago, Lawrence successfully prospected for tungsten in the nearby hills and invested his earnings in land. He built cabins for summer visitors and showed them how to ride horses properly and comfortably. Although now past seventy, he still enjoys taking his campers on long rides among the canyons and ridges of the mountains.

Our cabin was the original habitat of gold prospectors who had come there even before Lawrence's time. Except for a new addition in back, the little structure of three rooms was still the same; there were no modern conveniences of any sort. Some of the other cabins had been fitted with electricity, but this one still retained its primitive uniqueness.

We carried our water from the pump which was built on a platform above a well full of sweet, clear mountain-water that seeped down from the snow-fields fifty miles away. The old stove in the tiny kitchen had a small reservoir; if you wanted a supply of hot water, you had to fill it with several buckets of water and light the fires. The wood-box was just behind the door, and you guarded it tenaciously against the wet weather.

The bracing air and pure atmosphere put a keen edge on our appetites. If there were any pancakes left from breakfast, one of us took them down to a fallen log and left them there for the hungry little chipmunks to devour. We were nine thousand feet above sea-level, and our appetites were full of energy and zest.

Henry Lawrence is noted for his fine horsemanship and keen judgment of horses. Ranchers from all the neighbouring country recognize his authority and bring their animals to him for criticism and advice. While we were

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there he had a horse called Napoleon, who seemed to have complete freedom of the place. Three years ago Napoleon was brought up from the town of Boulder—thin, emaciated, and almost starved. Lawrence took care of him and gave him the best pasture along the creek; now he is sleek and round as a corpulent dowager. When you ask Lawrence how he happened to name Napoleon, he will tell you that one of his campers suggested the nomenclature because he had been so thin. "Call him Napoleon for his boney parts." At night we heard the horse walking about outside our windows and Lawrence told us that was because he was lonely and wanted to be near human beings.

Nearly every afternoon we bathed in the cold, swift water of Boulder Creek. The stream is fed by glaciers, and when we stepped into its shallows we gasped and our toes curled over the smooth round stones in its bed. In its deepest parts it was scarcely three feet in depth, but the current was so strong that you had to brace yourself against large rocks to keep from slipping downstream. It took all your courage to sit down and feel the water rush over you. But afterwards, when you got back to the cabin, walking barefoot over the stony soil carpeted with asters and great mountain daisies, you felt warm and clean and satisfied throughout your whole being.

Dream Canyon is for everybody from everywhere, and when I visited the camp there were people from every walk of life—all Americans to the very core. There was George Alphin, a prosperous wheat grower; Mrs. Niles, a schoolteacher; and Captain Minaci, who had just been released from the Army, an electrical engineer. Up the canyon lived other families at Switzerland Park.

Every week there was a bonfire down by the stream, and all the neighbouring countryside came in for the evening. A great log of dead wood would be placed upright and about its base smaller chunks of firewood were piled high. Mr. Gough, a cowboy from down the valley, would come up with his family, bringing his guitar with him; then he and all who were there would join in and sing the old ballads of the West. When the logs burned low and the coals glowed steadily, we toasted marshmallows on long green sticks.

Over the creek, not far from our cabin, lived Mr. Patton, who had been struck by lightning and whose entire left side was permanently paralyzed. I have never seen a man with more courage or steadfast spirit. He had bought a few acres from Henry Lawrence, built a modern cabin with all conveniences, seemed happy and contented there. With his one arm he sawed down trees and cut them up for

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firewood. He did rough carving, not too fancy, but quaint and versatile. In winter he sold his summer's work in Boulder, pulling a cart along the streets. No one could help but admire this man who had active use of only half his body, yet sustained himself in spite of mishap.

One August day we took to the high road that wound up to the glaciers not far away. At noon we picnicked in a pine and aspen grove on the virgin mountainside and by three o'clock we skirted the great cliff and came upon the snow. It was weird and awe-inspiring to feel the deep, cold pressure of the snow underfoot, while the sun shone hot and bright upon our faces. On the way down, we stopped and looked at the timberline trees with their strange, wind-twisted branches, huge burrs, and stunted growths. We drank from a roadside fountain that brought its water down from the glaciers we had left an hour before.

All over the mountains we found old tungsten mines in various stages of desertion. There were broken bits of machinery, old tracks that led down into the earth, and ramshackle huts sorry with neglect and decay. In one particular instance there was a mine which seemed to have been deserted just recently, yet had not been worked for years. The shafts were full, the machinery practically whole; a glove lay on the forge in a makeshift shelter, and an old corrugated iron shack leaned over the crumbling cliff. Bits of tools and metal lay everywhere; even the beams of the mine's damp roof were still solid. It was like walking through a haunted world, devoid of life but pregnant with suggestion and memories.

The wild life of the region was still abundant: there were countless signs of bear and deer and chipmunks—even of mountain lions. We often sat still with peanuts on our palms and, after a period of silence, felt the dainty front paws of a timid chipmunk scurry over our fingers. Then there was a quick little nip and it hurried away to its burrow.

Night falls fast in the canyons. After the evening meal, we would light the old kerosene lamps and sit around the plain table in the largest room. When the night drew down and the air became chill and sharp, we fell asleep to the music of the creek or to our own thoughts.

But if I remember Dream Canyon it will not be because of its beauty and happiness alone. It is America—full of freedom and fraternity, Nature, and creation. It is in places like that that you see the manifestation of God as a Master Workman and free your mind and life from the corruption of the crowded world. It is the genuine America that made America great.

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CHILDREN OF MARS

By Elsa Kruuse

THOSE who have never seen a trainload of refugee children pull into a railway station do not know what war is. No matter how much is written about it, no matter how good their imaginations, not until they have heard that quiet, hopeless sobbing, or had their arms clutched in desperation by a child asking, "What are they going to do with me now?"; not until they have seen that bleak apathy which can come into the eyes of a child who has lived with Death, do they know what war is.

It was 1944, and all over northern Europe the word was passed in whispers: "Try to get to Sweden." And the children came—on special trains, in little boats, hidden in the coal holes of big ships, and on foot. They came strapped to the backs of their fathers and mothers plodding slowly through deep snow to the Swedish borders. They came in leaking rowboats, from Denmark, Lithuania, and Latvia; from Esthonia, Germany, and faraway Holland.

To keep the children from crying and giving away their positions to their pursuers, their parents had to give them sedatives, or, lacking these, were forced to knock the children senseless to keep them quiet until they reached safety. Too often, however, a floating oar or an upturned boat washed up on the rocks told the mute story of new tragedy. From the shore, one could often hear the ping of rifle bullets echo over the water as the pursuers raced the tiny boats to that invisible line in the sea which, once crossed, meant peace from persecution.

Many of the children were dead when they arrived, and others would be before the grim Swedish workers, waiting on the shore with blankets, medicine, and hot food, could help them. Waiting there with them, I saw tough soldiers turn away and get sick, as they unloaded the boats. When someone handed me a bundle and I saw that it was a baby whose body had stopped the bullet meant for his father, I was sick too.

What is it that makes me remember that time when I thought I had blotted it out forever? It would be easier if one could forget.

"*We don't want war,*" the people say. "*Give us peace!*"

But, at night, the wraiths return, and I see the children with their pale faces and huge, hungry eyes, and their bewildered, vacant stares which sometimes quivered into consciousness with the shadow of a smile when a child heard its own language spoken.

"Here are friends," that look said. "Don't go away. Please!" Yet you had to go away to inspect and ticket the next group of passive, bewildered babies who had learned long ago that it didn't help to cry. Their grief was too deep for tears anyway, for most of them were orphans (though some did not know it at the time), or just as good as

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